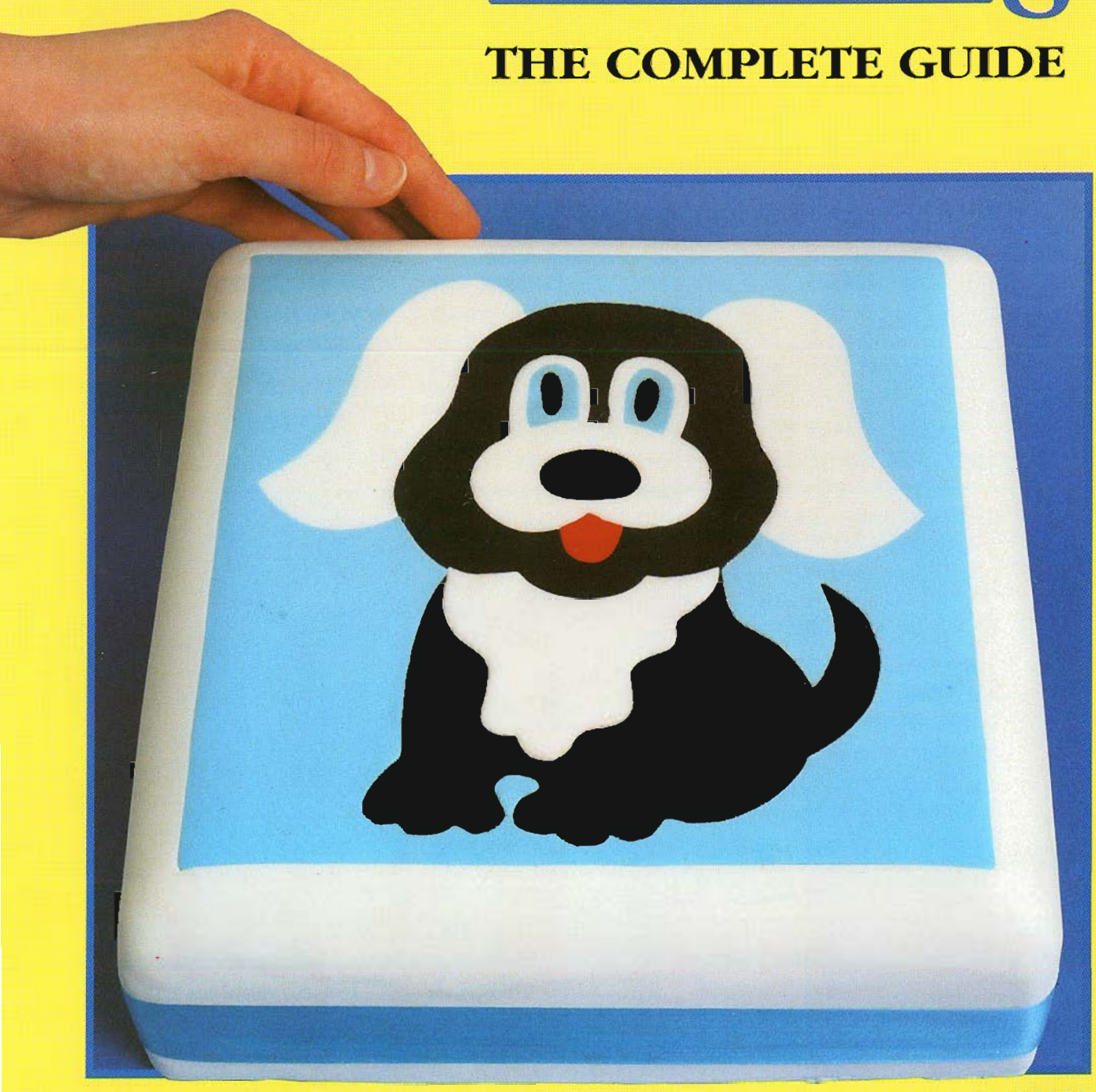
Cake decorating

22

THE COMPLETE GUIDE



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ORBIS DE AGOSTINI GROUP

Strawberry fairy cake

Strawberries are a favourite summer fruit, for their colour as well as their taste. Capture the essence of summer with this cake and its striking red and green decorations.

HAVE TO HAND

Ingredients: *20cm (8in) round rich fruit cake • apricot glaze • 750g marzipan • 1.25kg sugarpaste • green, red, yellow and paprika paste food colourings • clear alcohol • small amount of royal icing • flower paste • 125g modelling paste • pink and green petal dust • 7 sugar strawberries • 20 sugar rose leaves • 12 wired sugar strawberry blossoms.*

Equipment: *28cm (11in) round cake board • greaseproof paper • scriber • nos. 2, 1 and 0 piping tubes • scalpel • rose petal, leaf and calyx cutters • ball tool • veining tool • cocktail stick • 1m (39in) ribbon for cake board.*

Main skills: *moulding flower paste decorations • arranging flowers • extension work.*

DIFFICULTY	TIME	SUITABILITY
✓ ✓ ✓	⧗ ⧗ ⧗	

This stunning cake, with its colourful strawberry fairy decoration, makes a lovely birthday cake for an early summer birthday. Coat the marzipanned fruit cake with green-coloured sugarpaste and complete the delicate extension work around the sides of the cake before modelling the figure directly on to the top of the cake which is adorned with juicy strawberries and their leaves.

The fairy is dressed in a strawberry red outfit with a flower petal hat. Use modelling paste for the body and flower paste for the wings for added delicacy. Cut them in different sizes, using a rose petal cutter. The simple way to make strawberries, either with marzipan or flowerpaste, is shown on page 58. When wiring strawberries, use 26g floristry wire, hooked and dipped in egg white. Then insert the wire into the calyx.

PIPING EMBROIDERY

The cake is enhanced by scalloped extension work, piped in white royal icing to contrast with the green coating on the cake, and to show off the delicacy of the work. Embroidery-style icing above the extension work allows you to show your skill at another attractive piping technique.

All in all, a cake to be proud of, and one suitable for all age groups and all types of celebrations.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

1 Preparing the cake: Brush the cake with apricot glaze and coat with marzipan. Colour the sugarpaste a gooseberry-green colour and roll it out.

2 Covering the cake: Brush cake with clear alcohol and cover cake and board separately with coloured sugarpaste. Allow to dry for three days.

3 Marking extension-work pattern: Secure the cake to the board with royal icing, offsetting it slightly from the centre to leave room for a strawberry cluster on the right.

4 Preparing the design: Measure the height and circumference of the cake and cut a piece of greaseproof paper to this size. Fold it into 12 equal sections.

5 Drawing the design: Draw a scallop design on 10 of the sections, leaving two adjoining sections free, to place the strawberries.

6 Cutting the template: Draw a parallel scallop line about 3cm (1½in) above this, and cut out the template. Use a template to scribe lines of scallops on to the cake.

7 Piping the base of the cake: Using a no. 2 piping tube and white royal icing, pipe a small shell border around the base of the cake.

8 Piping extension work: Using a no. 1 tube, pipe curved bridgework along the lower scalloped line. Pipe the drop lines next, working from the upper scribed line down to the bridgework. Allow this to dry completely before piping the embroidery.

9 Piping embroidery: Using a no. 1 tube, pipe over the top edge of the extension work, and pipe embroidery above this. Extend the piping and embroidery over the plain sections, to frame the moulded strawberries.

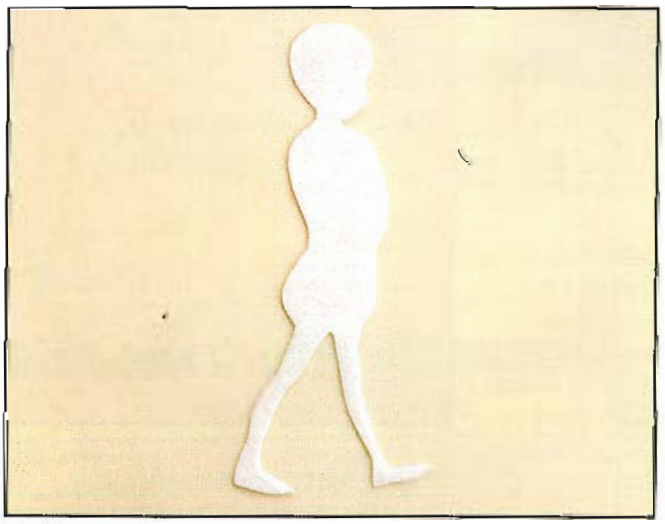
10 Painting details: Paint the background on top of the cake with food colouring. Use brush embroidery on some of the leaves to give them substance and dimension.

11 Adding the fairy: Cut the card templates of fairy sections on thin card and number them. Assemble the bas-relief fairy directly on to the cake following the instructions.

12 Adding strawberry decoration: Attach sprays of strawberries, leaves and blossoms to the top and sides of the cake with royal icing, taking care not to damage the sugarpaste coating with the wires.

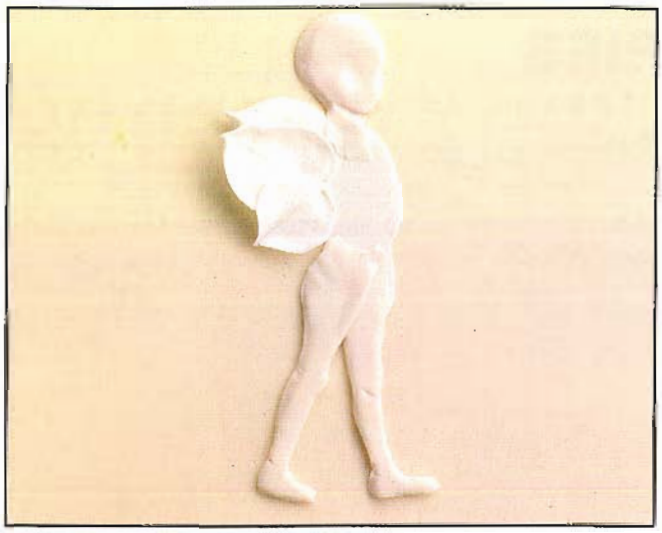
13 Finishing the decoration: Work the inscription and 'dot' embroidery with a no. 0 piping tube and green-coloured royal icing. Finally, trim the cake board with a pastel-coloured, patterned ribbon.

MOULDING THE FAIRY

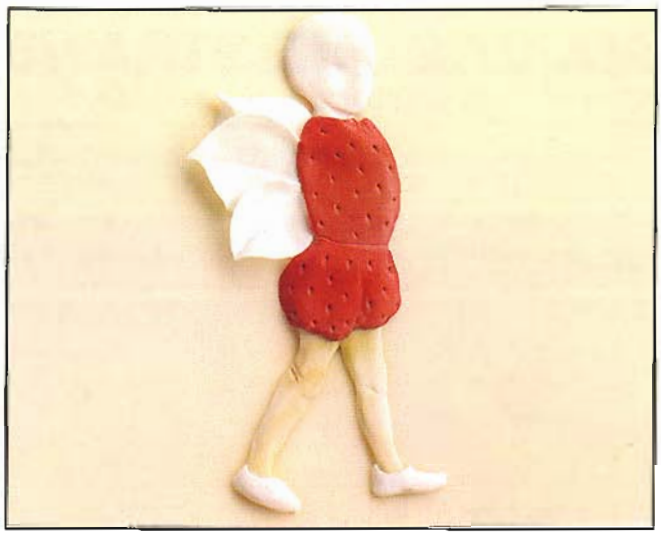


1 Making the body: Divide modelling paste into five equal parts. Colour these white, flesh, red, dark and pale green. Roll out white modelling paste and cut out body template. Dampen back of paste and place on cake.

2 Attaching wings: Roll out white flower paste thinly. Cut two medium and one small rose petal. Smooth edges and mark centre lines with a veining tool. Attach medium petals first, overlapping as shown, to look like wings.



3 Padding body: Use white modelling paste to pad forehead and cheek. Shape with wide end of veining tool, then cover the head with flesh-coloured paste. Attach legs and smooth the edges. Dust the legs with green petal dust.



4 Adding clothes: Roll the red modelling paste slightly thicker than the white. Cut tunic and trousers, attach to figure and smooth edges. Prick small holes with a cocktail stick for the pips. Cut shoes in white paste.

5 Completing the fairy: Paint face and hair. Attach the green cap and roll the petal edges back. Cut green frills and attach them at the neck and waist. Cut out two green leaves to form the basket, and add four strawberries. Pipe pips on tunic in yellow icing with a no. 0 piping tube.

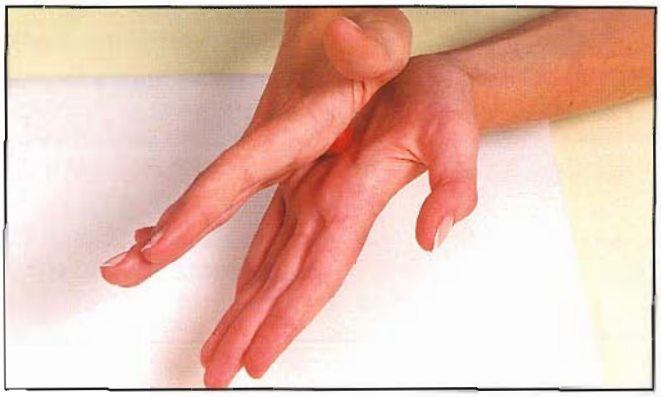
6 Finishing touches: Attach the arm and hand. Cut a white rose petal for the sleeve and smooth the edges. Cut two small green calyxes and attach them to the shoes. Pipe the centres of the calyxes in yellow royal icing with a no. 1 piping tube.

helpline

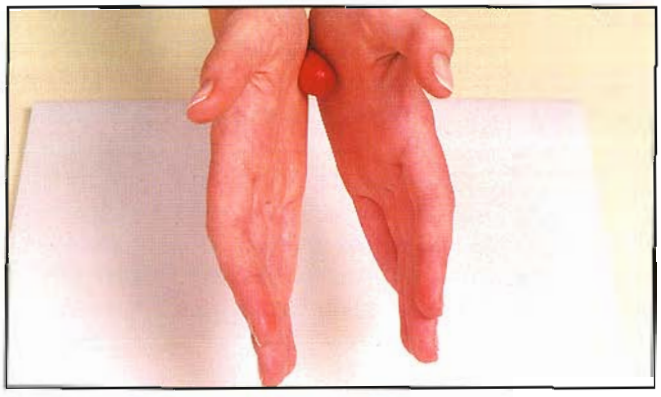
ADDING COLOUR

Sometimes, a cake calls for modelling pastes in a range of colours, or asks for deepening hues of the same colour. The hat, belt and collar of the fairy (above) could be coloured a deep green, and the leaves that form the basket pale green. To avoid waste, begin by colouring your paste until you have the requisite shade of pale green. Then you can continue to add colour to the remaining paste, deepening its shade as you go along. In this way you can create several shades of the same colour without having to colour each piece separately. You can use petal dust to add blush to the cheek of the fairy and to dust his wings and hat. Petal dust gives a sheen rather than a solid colour, depending on how heavily it is applied, and adds subtlety and contour to decorations.

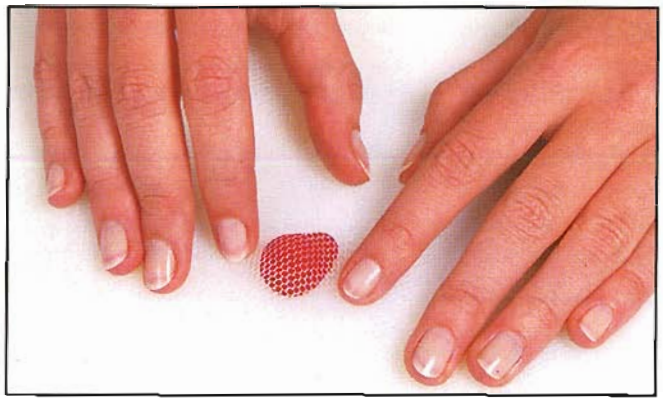
MAKING THE STRAWBERRIES



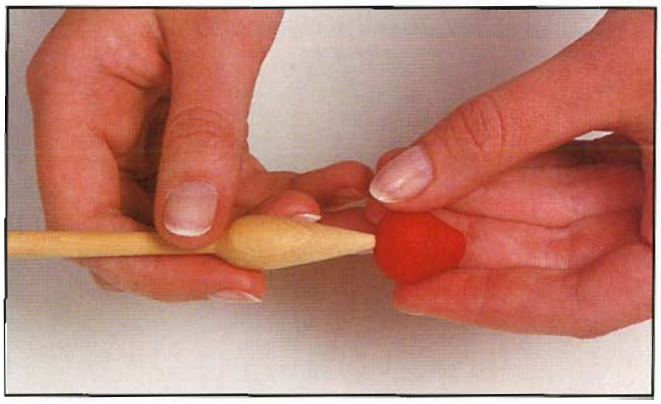
1 Shaping the fruit: Colour some marzipan or flower paste using Christmas red paste food colouring. Shape the coloured paste into a small ball by rolling it between the palms of your hands.



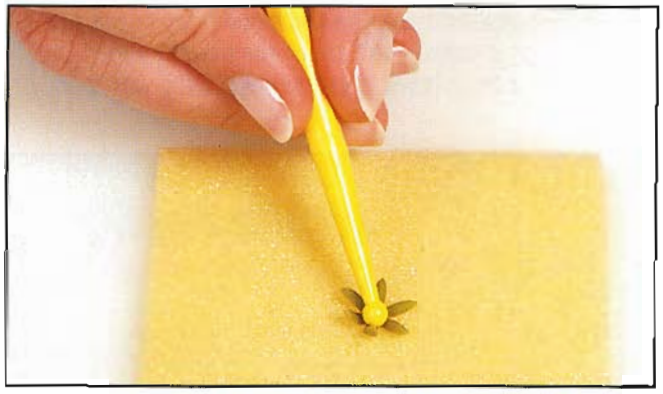
2 Creating the cone: Shape the red ball into a cone by holding it in the base of your palms and gently rolling it back and forth as shown. The more you roll it, the more cone-shaped it will become.



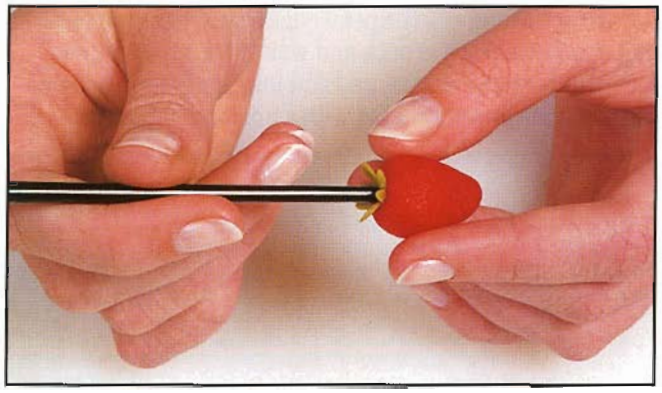
3 Creating a dimpled effect: Place the cone shape on top of a non-stick board and place a piece of nylon netting over the top of it. Gently pull the netting against the surface to create a dimpled effect.



4 Preparing for the calyx: Use a pointed tool, such as a piece of pointed dowel or the cone end of a star tool, to make a hole in the top of the strawberry to hold the small calyx. Do not make the hole too deep.



5 Making the calyx: Use a small daisy cutter to make a six-pointed calyx. Place the calyx on a piece of foam and use a ball tool to curl it. Roll from the calyx tip in towards the centre.

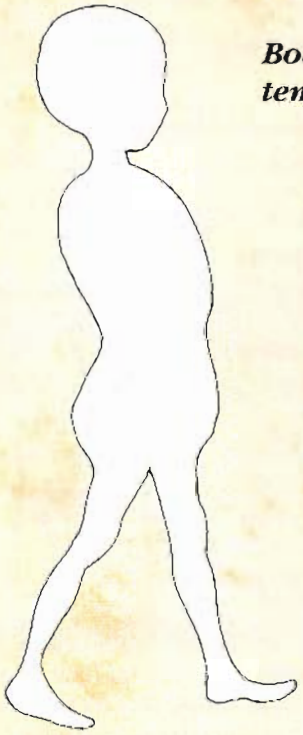


6 Attaching the calyx: Use a paintbrush to wet the area around the hole in the top of the strawberry with a little water. Place the calyx over the hole and gently press it into position with the handle of the paintbrush.

Strawberry fairy cake

TEMPLATE COLLECTION 39

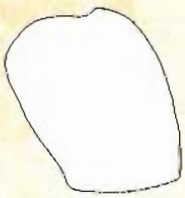
***HOW TO USE YOUR TEMPLATES:** Lay a sheet of tracing paper over the various templates and trace on to the paper. You may find it easier if you then cut the paper so that each template is separate. Using a scriber, trace the template shapes on to the rolled marzipan or sugarpaste.*



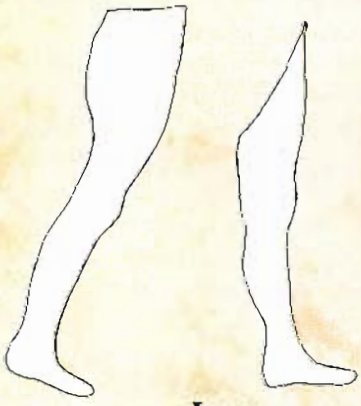
Body template

Frills

Head



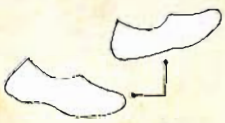
Tunic



Legs

Arm

Trousers



Shoes

Ribbon insertion techniques

The art of inserting loops of ribbon into a cake is both surprisingly easy to learn, and also a most effective decorative technique.

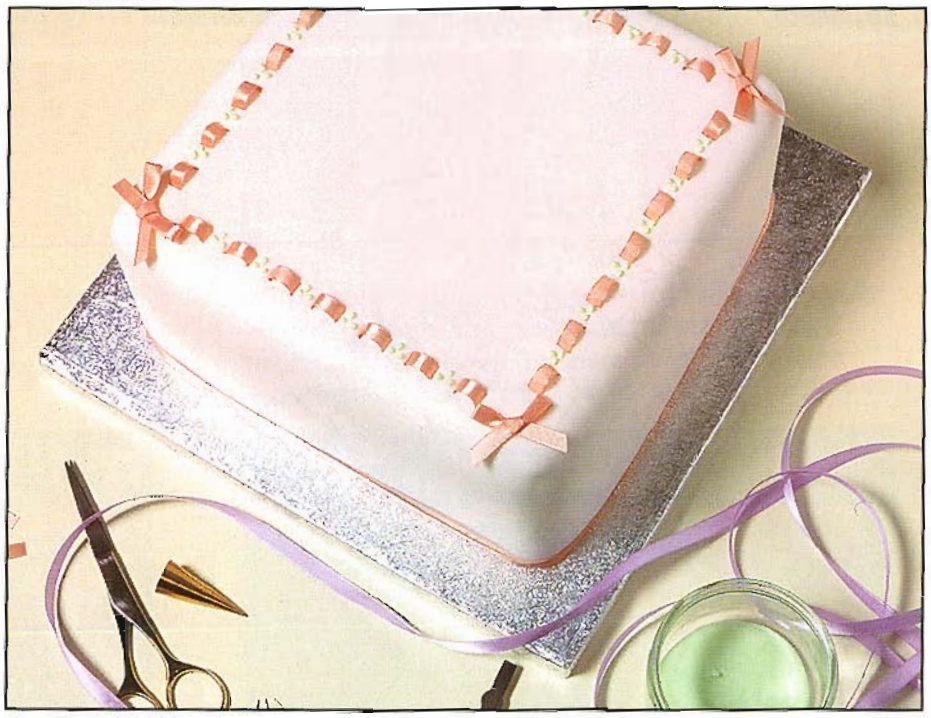
HAVE TO HAND

Ingredients: *17.5cm (7in) square cake • 875g sugarpaste • 875g marzipan.*

Equipment: *pencil • ruler • greaseproof paper • piping tubes (for weighting template) • glass-headed pin • ribbon insertion knife or scalpel • ribbon.*

Main skills: *using templates • inserting ribbon.*

DIFFICULTY TIME SUITABILITY



When ribbon is successfully inserted into the surface of a sugarpasted cake, it should give the illusion of a single piece of ribbon being woven through the icing. For a neat appearance, all the pieces of ribbon should be exactly the same size and the spaces between them should be equal.

Ribbon should never be inserted into a freshly sugarpasted cake. The task is much easier if the sugarpaste coating is left for at least three days to dry out. After three days there is much less likelihood of denting the sugarpaste as you insert the ribbon.

THE TOOL FOR THE JOB

A special ribbon insertion knife can be purchased from cake-decorating supply shops. If you do not have such a knife, however, you can use a scalpel. To make a slot for the ribbon, insert the scalpel blade into the sugarpaste in the appropriate place – taking great care not to cut into the layer of marzipan underneath – remove it, then turn it around, and insert it again into the same cut.

THE RIBBON PIECES

The template we have provided can be used on a 17.5cm (7in) square cake. The distances between the slots for each ribbon piece is 1cm (approximately ½in), and the space between the ribbon pieces is the same. Each ribbon piece should be cut to a length of 2cm (approx. 1in) to allow the ribbon to be tucked into the sugarpaste.

MAKING A TEMPLATE

To make a template for a larger square cake, measure the width of the cake, then cut a square of greaseproof paper 4cm (2in) smaller. Mark off 1cm (approx. ½in) divisions along the side of the paper with a pencil. The pencil marks must be at the very edge of the paper to allow you to position the pin marks for the ribbon slots (see step 2).

ADDITIONAL DECORATION

Ribbon insertion is often accompanied by crimper work or piped embroidery. If you wish to add a crimped design to your cake, remember that this must be done before the ribbon has been inserted and when the sugarpaste is still soft.

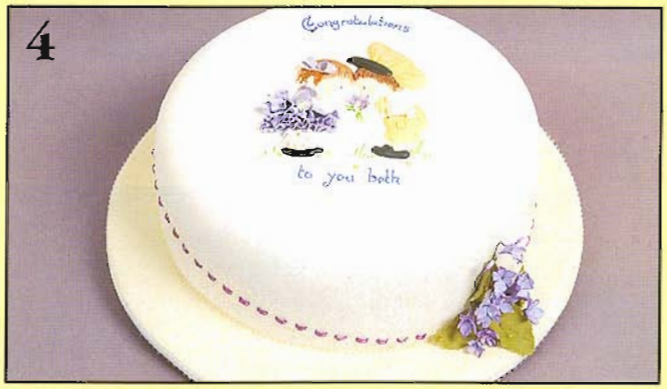
Piped flowers can be added once the ribbon work has been completed, either as a decorative edging to the ribbon insertion, or in the form of tiny flowers, piped in the spaces between the ribbon pieces.

For an extra touch, a tiny ribbon bow can be added at each corner of the cake. You can either make these yourself, or buy them ready-made.

RIBBON INSERTION IDEAS

The pictures on this page show some of the effects that can be achieved using ribbon insertion. They include ribbon being used to frame an inset plaque, as a side decoration, and to form an unusual design on the top of a cake.

A red ribbon insert complements the red theme of a ruby wedding cake. One circle of ribbon emphasizes the '40' on the upper cake, and is echoed by a larger one finished with two scrolls on the lower cake.



An unusually shaped ribbon insert is started from a high point at the back of the cake and curves down on each side to meet the posy of violets at centre front. The violet colour echoes the violet flower theme.

Here, a ribbon insert forms a pretty frame for a runout ballerina figure on the top of a 21st birthday cake. The spaces between the ribbon are decorated with piped embroidery to match that on the sides of the cake.

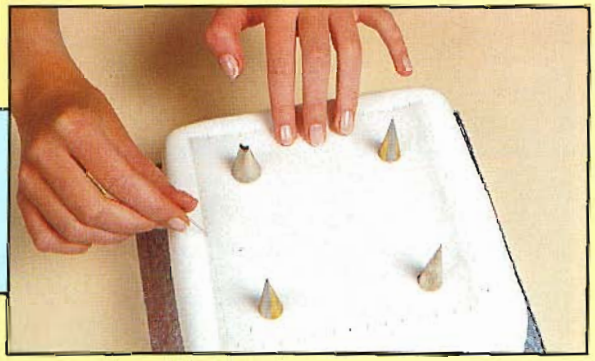
Pink ribbon and white piped lace combine to give an engagement cake a soft, romantic look. The ribbon curves from the centre of each side down to a point at the corners. Lace pieces are then added on each side.

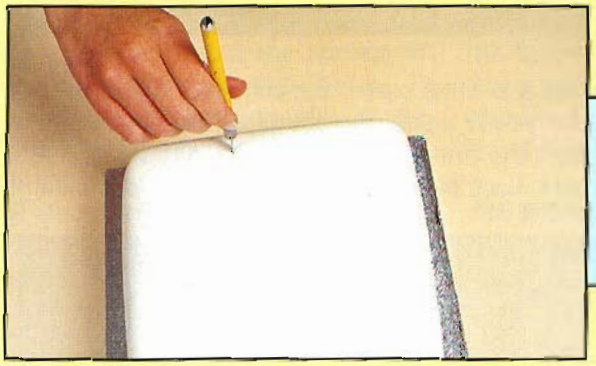
A painted plaque is prettily framed and emphasized by a circle of ribbon inserts in the same colour as the extension work on the side of the cake. Broad bands of lacework on either side give the ribbon more impact.

INSERTIN

1 Positioning the template: Trace the template provided on to a square of greaseproof paper. Place the paper centrally on the cake, and weigh it down with four piping tubes.

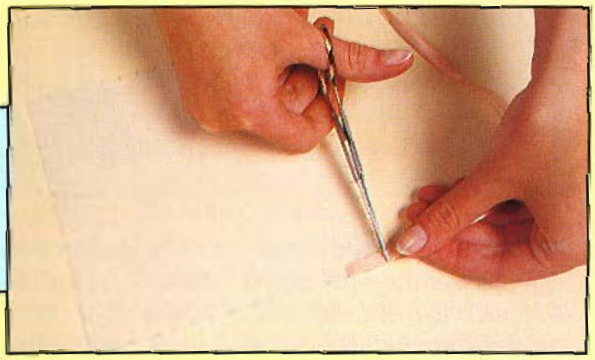
2 Marking the ribbon slots: Use a glass-headed pin to mark the positions for the ribbon slots all the way round each side of the cake. For a successful end result, this needs to be done very accurately.





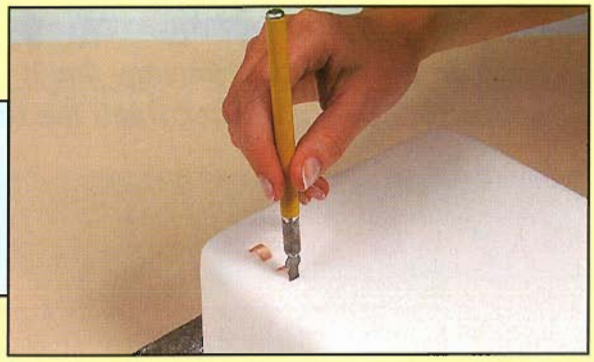
3 Cutting the slots: Use a ribbon-insertion blade to cut the slots in the sugarpaste. Only penetrate the paste to a depth of about 3mm (1/8in). Take care not to penetrate the marzipan coating underneath.

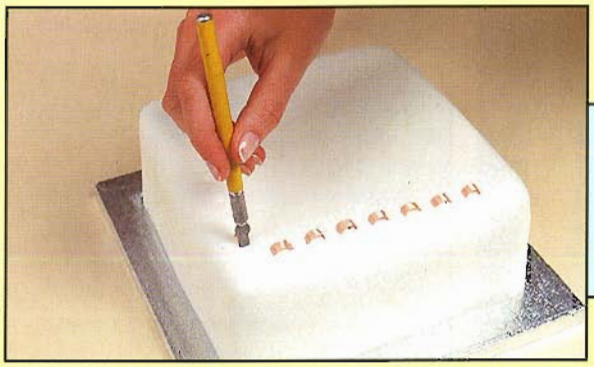
4 Cutting the ribbon: Cut a piece of ribbon approximately 1cm (approximately 1/2in) larger than the size of the slot. You can use the template provided as a guide.



RIBBON

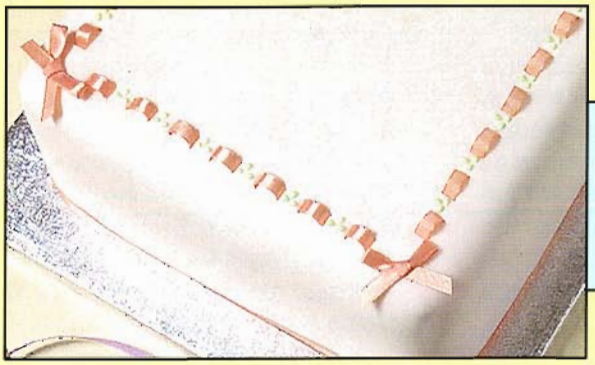
5 Inserting the ribbon: Gently press one end of the ribbon into a slot in the sugarpaste, curl the ribbon over, and press the other end into the neighbouring slot with the ribbon insertion knife.





6 Completing the insertion: Insert the ribbon pieces along one side of the cake. When the side is completed, turn the cake around so the side you are about to work on is closest to you, and continue.

7 Adding piped flowers: Pipe in some small, three-petalled flowers in the gaps between the pieces of ribbon, using a suitably coloured royal icing and a no. 0 piping tube.

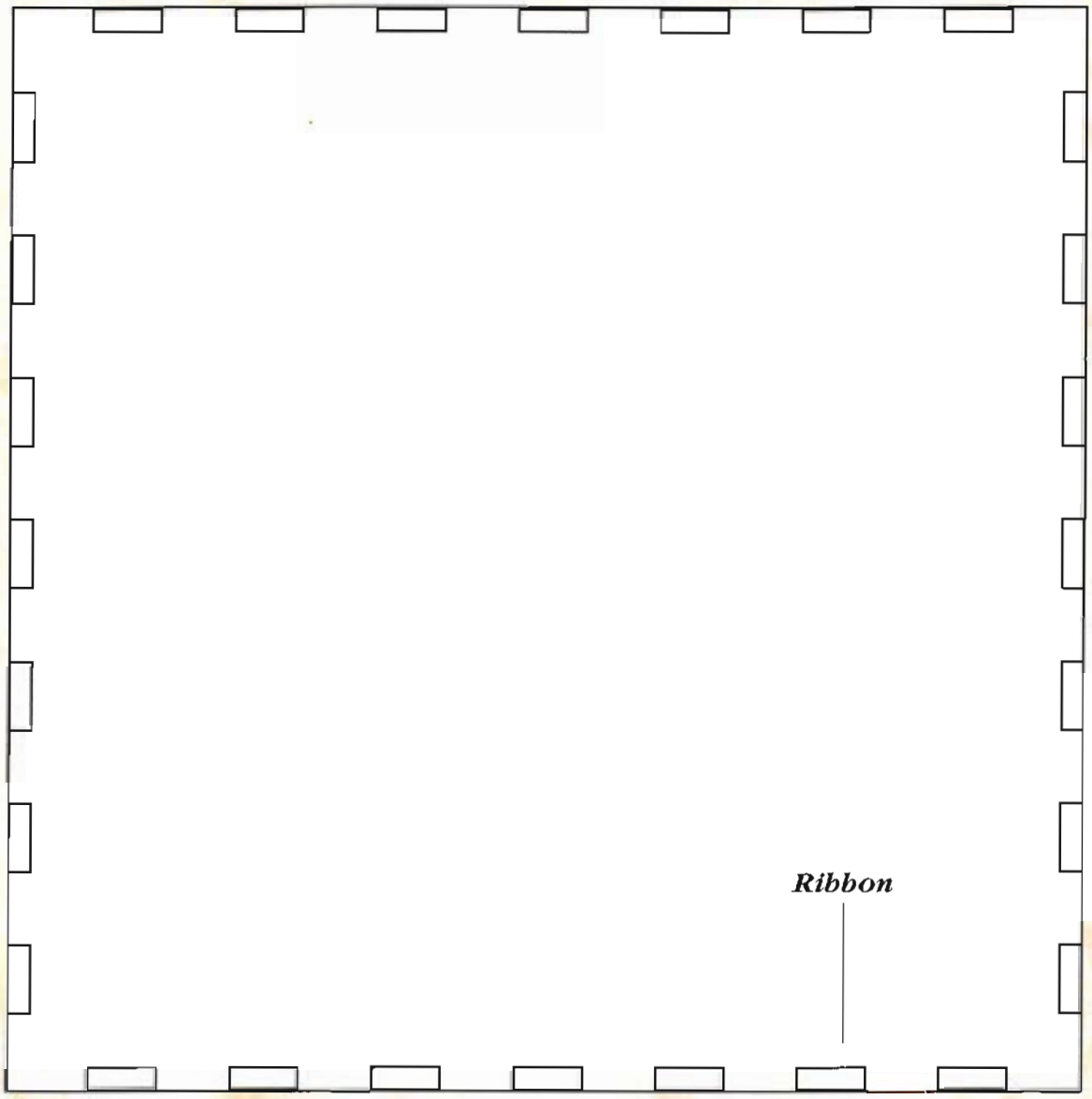


8 Adding a finishing touch: Once all the flowers have been piped in position, add a tiny ribbon bow at each corner of the cake. You can either make these bows, or buy them ready-made.

Ribbon insertion techniques

TEMPLATE COLLECTION 40

***HOW TO USE YOUR TEMPLATES:** Lay a sheet of tracing paper over the various templates and trace on to the paper. You may find it easier if you then cut the paper so that each template is separate. Using a scriber, trace the template shapes on to the rolled marzipan or sugarpaste.*



A boy's best friend

This friendly dog will delight both children and dog-lovers alike. Vary the colour of the dog so the cake relates to a special pet.

HAVE TO HAND

***Ingredients:** 20cm (8in) square cake • 1kg sugarpaste (for covering cake) • 875g sugarpaste (for inserts) • 1kg marzipan • blue, black and red paste food colouring • icing sugar • white vegetable fat.*

***Equipment:** non-stick rolling pin • non-stick board • ruler • scalpel • greaseproof paper • rose petal cutter (optional) • small cranked palette knife (optional) • pins • smoother • spacers • cling film.*

***Main skill:** inlaying sugarpaste.*

DIFFICULTY	TIME	SUITABILITY
✓ ✓	⧗ ⧗	🎈

This inlaid sugarpaste cake looks deceptively simple, but you need to be accurate when cutting out the various sections to achieve a perfect finished result. To ensure that each section is the same depth, use spacers when rolling out the sugarpaste.

All the cutting and fitting of the various parts of the dog must be done while the sugarpaste is still soft, as once the paste has dried, it will be impossible to carry out the final task of polishing the sugarpaste to pull the whole design together. This means you must work quickly. It also means that the paste will stretch if you handle it carelessly.

AVOIDING PROBLEMS

Another area where you might encounter problems is inserting white sugarpaste into areas where black sugarpaste has to be removed, such as the ears and chest.

The colouring used for black sugarpaste is very strong, and if you are not very careful, it can easily discolour the adjacent white paste. To avoid this happening, always cut out the white sections first. If you cut out the black sections first, dye can get on to the template and be transferred to the white paste.

Also, make sure that you wash your hands every time you handle the black sugarpaste.

ASSEMBLING THE CAKE

As you assemble the various sections of the dog, don't be too worried if there are small gaps between them. Once all the pieces are in place, simply dust the top of the cake lightly with icing sugar, and then polish it with the heel of your hands. The icing sugar will fill any small gaps, and a smooth finish will appear. If there is any excess sugar left on the cake, cover the top of the cake with cling film and leave it for a few hours. The excess sugar will gradually be absorbed into the paste.

To finish off, attach a broad band of suitably coloured ribbon around the sides of the cake.

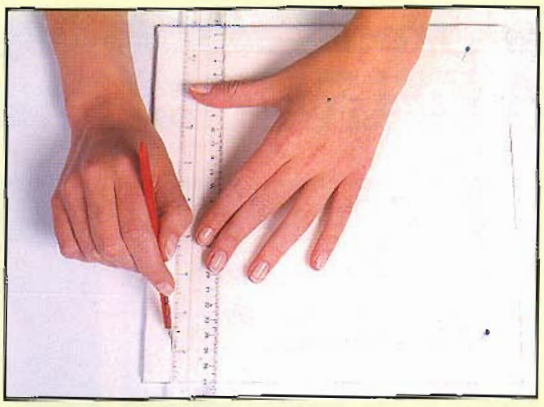
PROFESSIONAL SECRETS

Making the task easier

- Once you have cut out all the templates, put them in an envelope when not in use. Tiny templates, such as the ones for the eyes and the tongue, are easily mislaid.
- Take great care when handling the blue inset. Hold it flat with both hands, otherwise the paste may stretch.
- Once the blue square inset is in position, smooth it out using a plastic smoother, working from the centre of the inset outwards.
- Dip the blade of your knife in white vegetable fat before cutting each section. This will make the blade glide through the sugarpaste more easily.
- When cutting out the shapes, use a series of small cuts to avoid dragging the sugarpaste.
- Take great care when cutting out the individual templates. Even small mistakes will show up on the finished cake.
- For the pupils of the eyes, you may find it easier to use a tiny rose petal cutter, rather than the template provided.
- When you have finished making the cake, store the templates flat. They can be used time and again if you choose to do the same cake, perhaps using different colours.

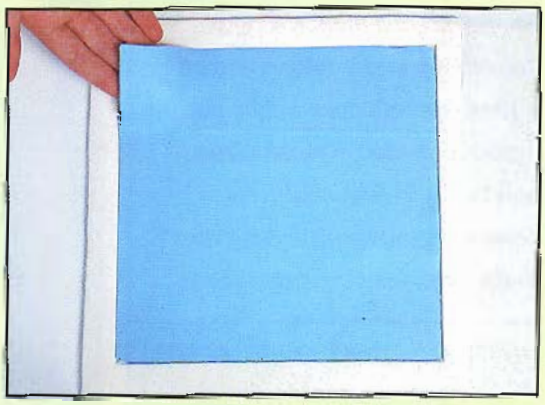
STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Starting off: *Place 180mm (7in) square of greaseproof paper on top of the cake and hold it in position with glass-headed pins. Using a ruler as a guide, cut out and remove a section of white paste.*



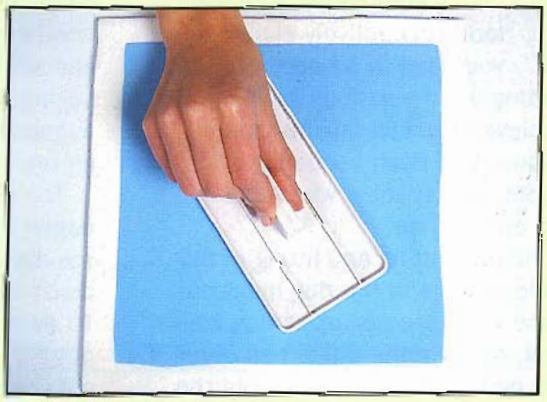
1

Insetting the blue: *Roll out blue sugarpaste and use the paper square and a scalpel to cut out a section of blue paste. Inset this into the top of the cake, taking care not to stretch it as you do so.*



2

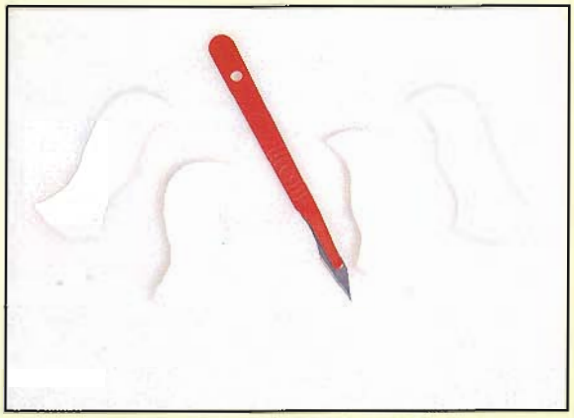
Smoothing the top: *Once the blue paste is in position, use a plastic smoother to polish the paste and to smooth the join between the white and blue areas. Work from the centre outwards.*



3

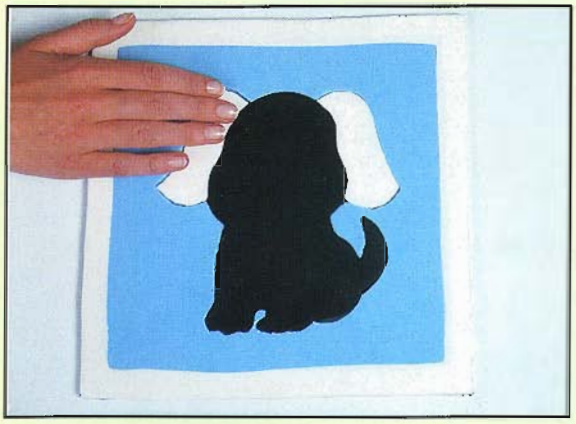
The black silhouette: *Using spacers as shown, roll out some black sugarpaste. Then, using the template provided, cut out the body shape of the dog from the top of the cake. Then cut the same shape from black sugarpaste and insert this into the top of the cake.*

4



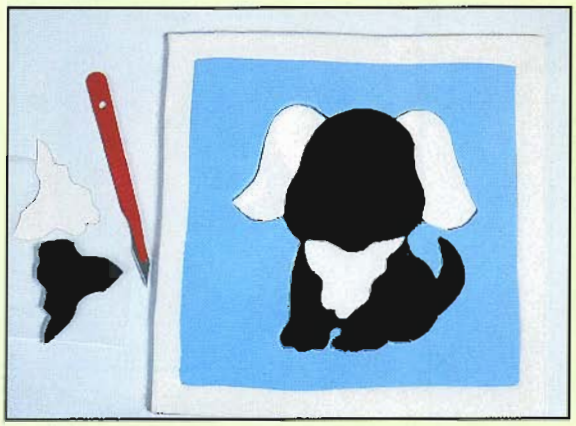
Cutting the ears: *Using two spacers, roll out some white sugarpaste, then use the templates provided and a scalpel to cut out the two ear shapes. You can use the white paste removed from the top of the cake for all the white sections.*

5



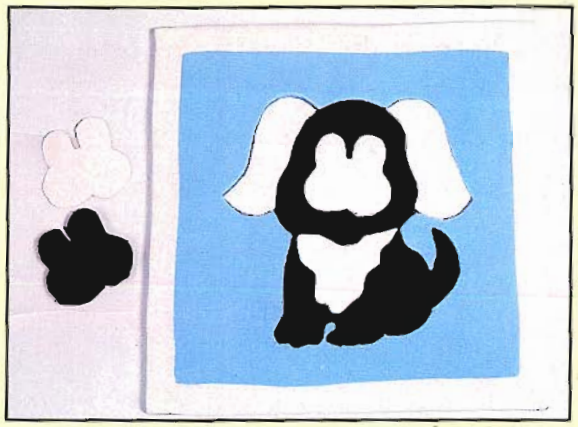
Insetting the ears: *Cut out the two ear shapes from the black silhouette on top of the cake and remove them. Inset the two white ear sections, gently easing them into place with your fingers. The black paste can be stored and reused at a later date.*

6



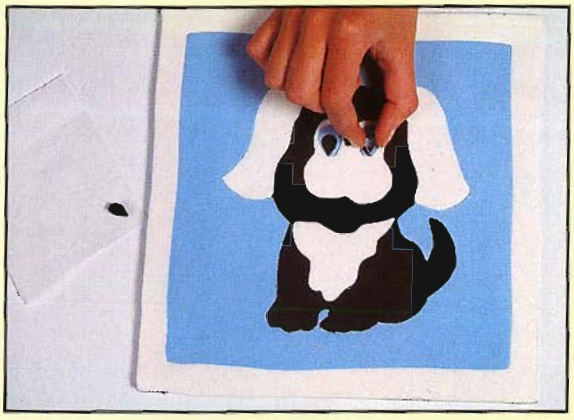
Insetting the chest: *Roll out some white paste and cut out the chest shape. Next, cut out and remove the same shape from the black silhouette on the cake and inset the white one. Make sure you wash your hands after removing the black shape and before insetting the white.*

7



Insetting the face: *Once the chest is in place, repeat the same procedure to inset the face. Don't worry if there are small gaps between the various sections, as these can be filled with icing sugar once all the different parts of the dog are in position.*

8

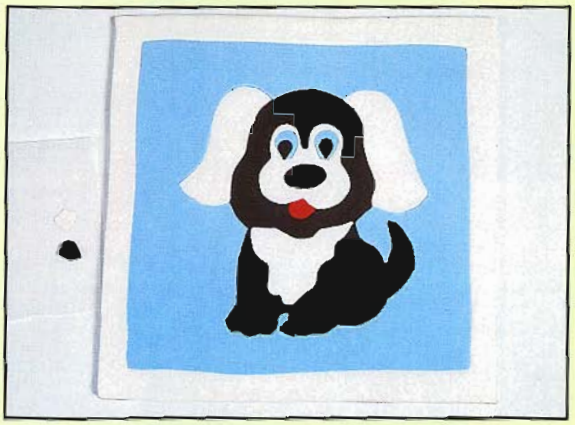


Positioning the eyes: *Cut out the blue sections for the eyes, then cut out and remove the eye sections from the black silhouette. Put the blue shapes in place. Use a small rose petal cutter to cut out two small blue sections, and insert black sections for the pupils.*

9

Positioning the nose: *Use the template to cut out the tiny oval for the nose. Use the body template as a guide when cutting out the black oval and popping the white one into place. You may find it easier to use a small cranked palette knife to handle the smaller pieces.*

10



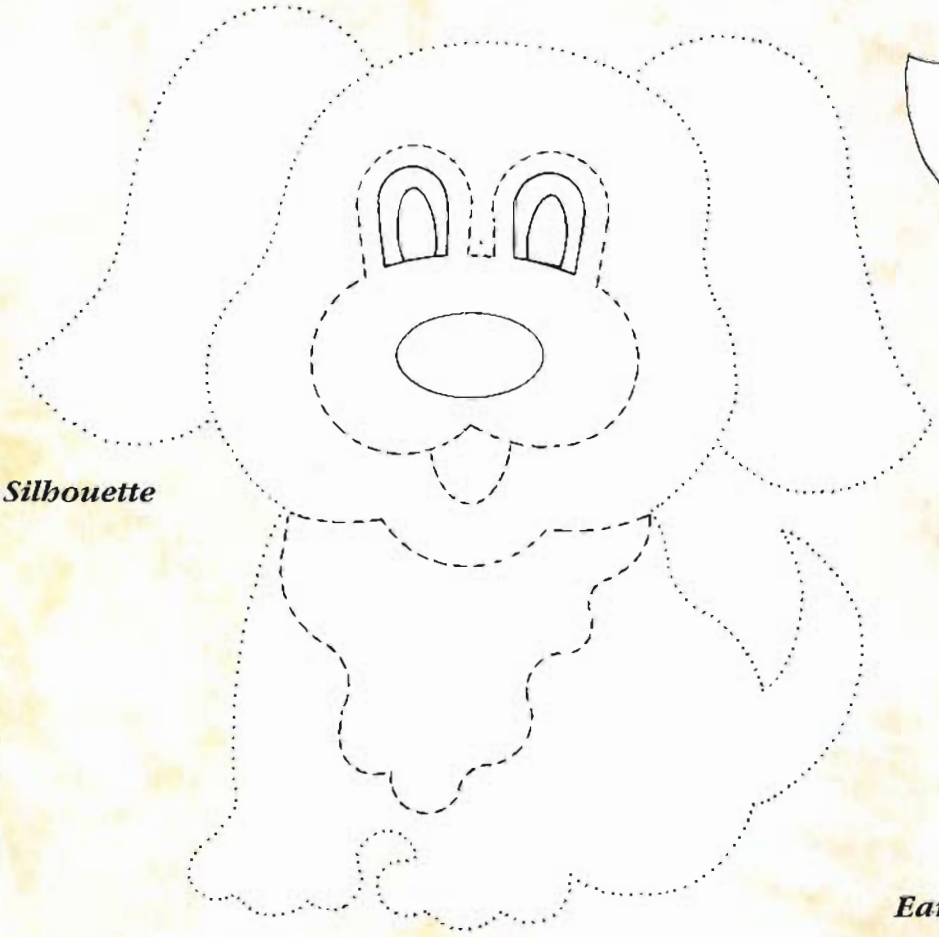
Finishing off: *Finally, lightly dust the top of the cake with icing sugar and polish the paste with the heel of your hand. Once the surface stops feeling grainy, continue polishing the paste with a plastic smoother. Place cling film over the surface and set aside to dry out.*

11

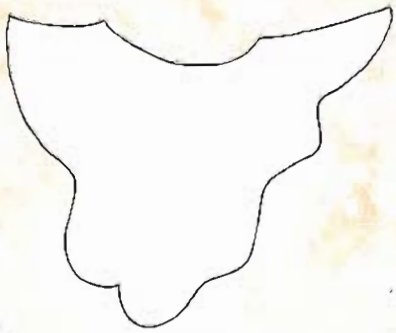
A boy's best friend

TEMPLATE COLLECTION 41

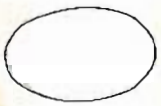
HOW TO USE YOUR TEMPLATES: *Lay a sheet of tracing paper over the various templates and trace on to the paper. You may find it easier if you then cut the paper so that each template is separate. Using a scriber, trace the template shapes on to the rolled marzipan or sugarpaste.*



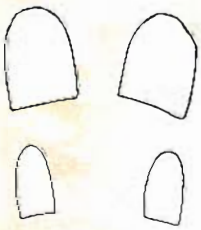
Silhouette



Chest



Nose



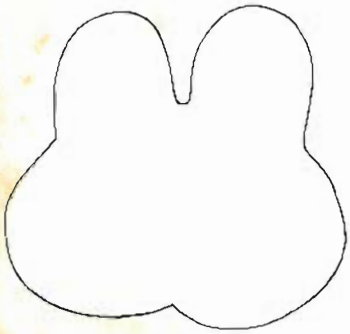
Eyes

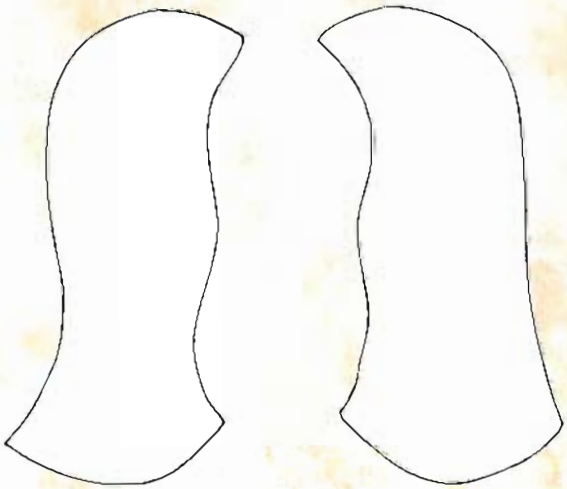
Pupils

Ears

Tongue

Face





Enlarge templates by 133%

Advanced extension work

Properly executed, extension work can create effects both dramatic and delicate on a cake. A steady hand, a good eye and completely smooth royal icing are just three of the essentials for success with this piping technique.

HAVE TO HAND

Ingredients: *royal icing.*

Equipment: *nos. 1, 0 and 00 piping tubes • greaseproof paper • pencil • scissors • scriber.*

Main skills: *piping extension work • making templates.*

DIFFICULTY	TIME	SUITABILITY
✓ ✓ ✓	⧖ ⧖ ⧖	

The simplest type of extension work involves piping drop lines on to a previously piped scalloped bridgework close to the base of the cake. Once this has been mastered, you can move on to more creative work, such as scalloping the top edge to match the bottom, curving both top and bottom edges of the extension outwards, putting tiered extensions at the corners, adding ribbon, overpiping to create a curtain effect, bevelled extensions and many other variations.

In addition, the extensions can be finished off with piped lacework, or loops and embroidery, making this one of the most versatile of all the many cake-decorating techniques.

Successful extension work requires a steady hand and correct preparation of both the icing and the surface to which the extension work is to be applied. You also need some basic equipment, including a turntable if possible, and the ability to make templates. Above all, though, extension work takes constant practice, especially if you aim to tackle some of the more complex designs.

BUILDING UP BRIDGEWORK

Piping the bridgework is an important part of extension work. It is usually formed from a solid build-up of rows of icing, which extend out from the side of the cake. There may be as many as 14 rows, although the last row should be visible from the side only.

In cases where the extension work extends down to the cake board, it is not supported on a bridgework, but on piped loops, which are piped with the cake and board upside down, or on piped scallops, which can be piped directly on to the cake board.

The cake board will act as a support, but both cake and board must be handled carefully, as the slightest knock could cause the extension work to break.

When you are ready to start piping the drop lines, be sure to have the section of the cake on which you are working set centrally in front of you, or else you will end up with lines that fall at a slight angle, rather than straight. Remove damaged or uneven droplines with a damp sable paintbrush.

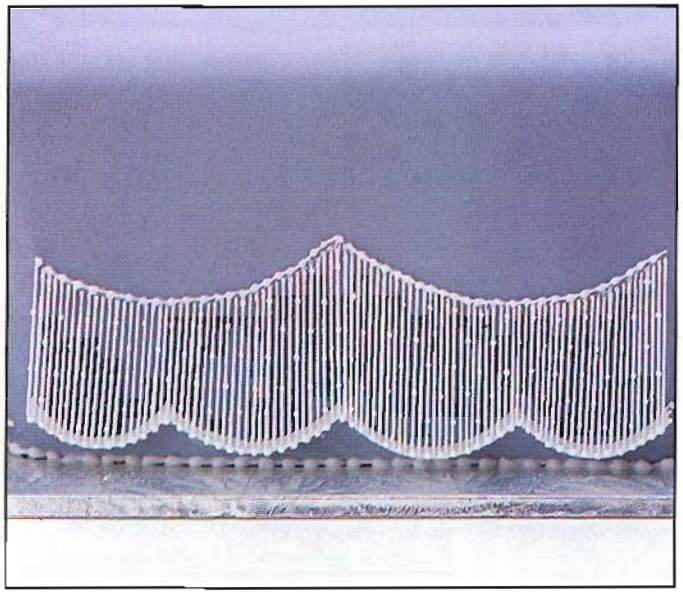
If you practise the basic extension work techniques, you will soon be able to tackle some of the more advanced effects – such as bevelled extension work and diagonal overpiping – shown on the following pages.

tip

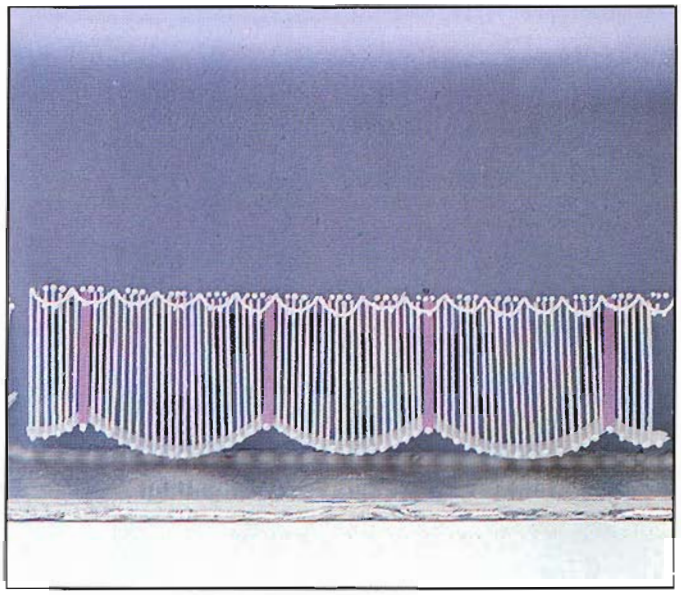
PROTECTING THE WORK

Any ribbon insertion, broderie anglaise, or embroidery should be applied to the side of your cake before you pipe extension work, in order to avoid damaging the delicate finished structure.

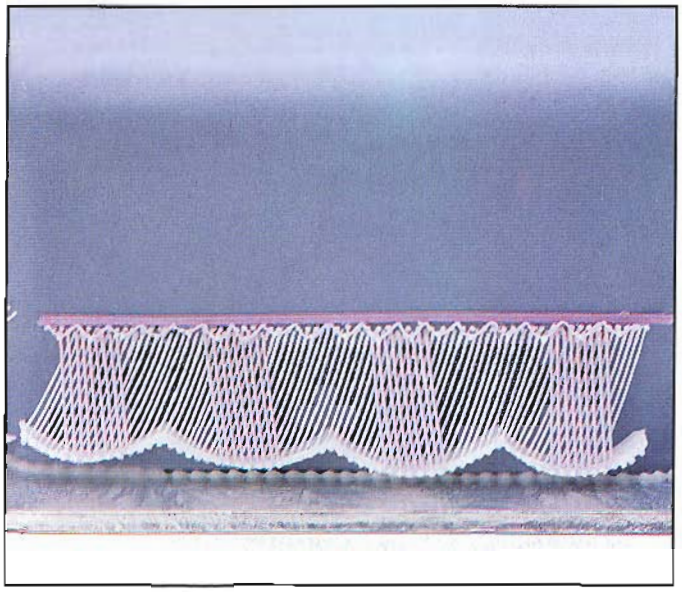
EXTENSION WORK DESIGNS



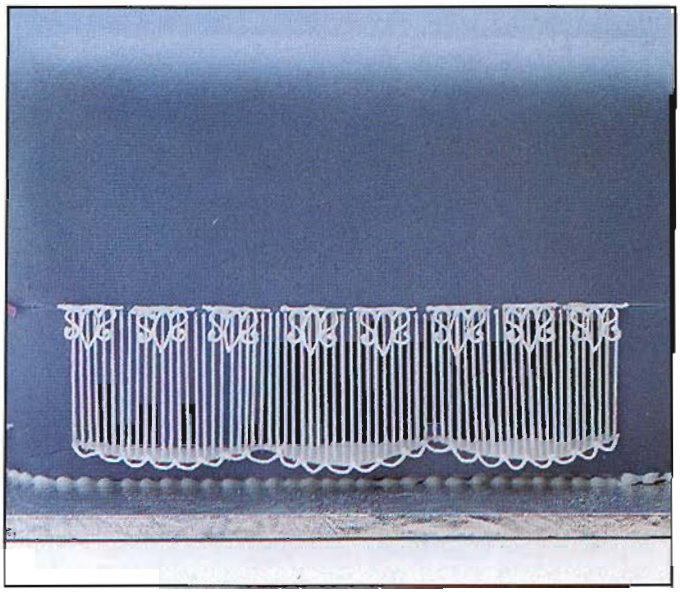
1 Shaped top: Add double-sized scallops to top of the basic template. Pipe bridgework and drop curtain work down from upper scallops. Finish top edge with a snail's trail, and lower edge with tiny dots. If you wish, pipe hailspots over surface.



2 Ribbon inserts: At the apex of each scallop, instead of a piped drop line, add a piece of ribbon, cut to length and attached with a drop of icing at top and bottom. Pipe wide loops across the top. Finish top and bottom of lines with dots.

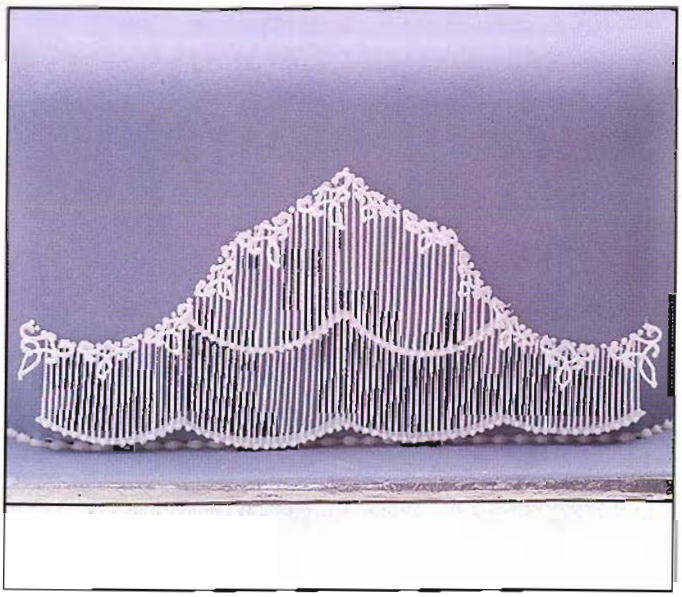


3 Diagonal overpiping: Pipe drop lines with cake tilted forward and propped up so they are on the diagonal. Pipe a second line of bridgework on top of the first. Prop cake from the other side, and pipe more lines in the opposite direction.

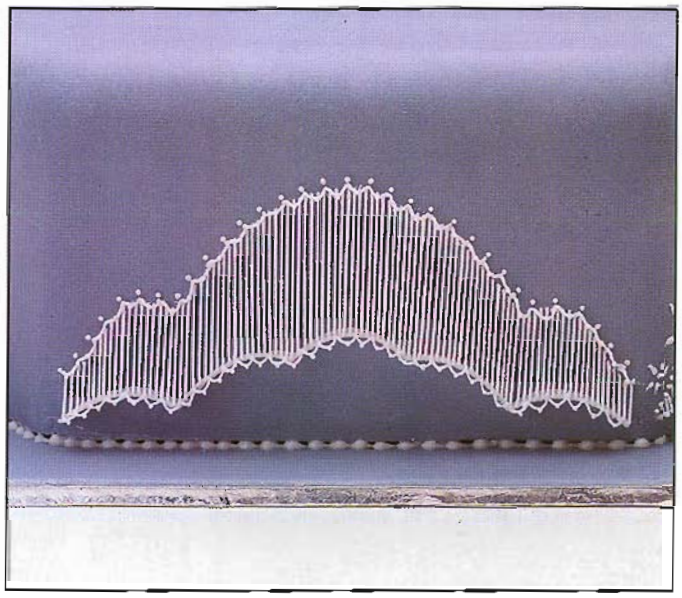


4 Bevelled work: Here, three-dimensional scallops are formed by piping curved bridgework, thicker in the centre than at each side. Pipe dropped lines in the usual way, then add piped lace to the top and loops to the lower edge.

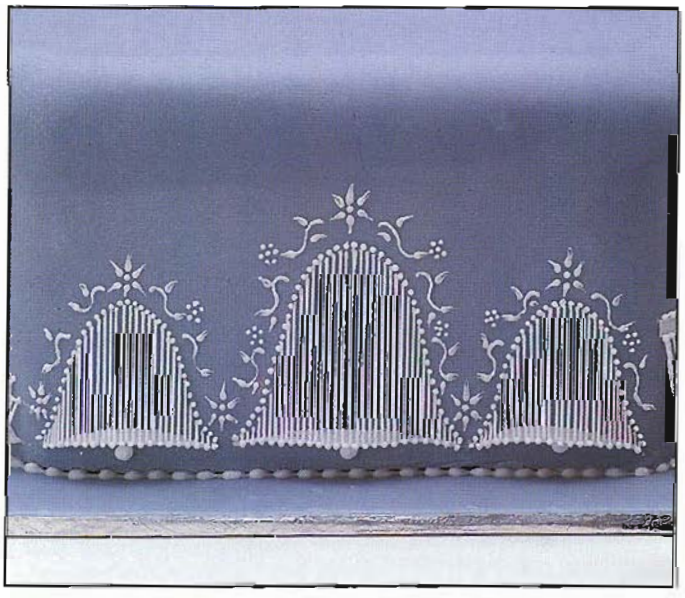
EXTENSION WORK DESIGNS



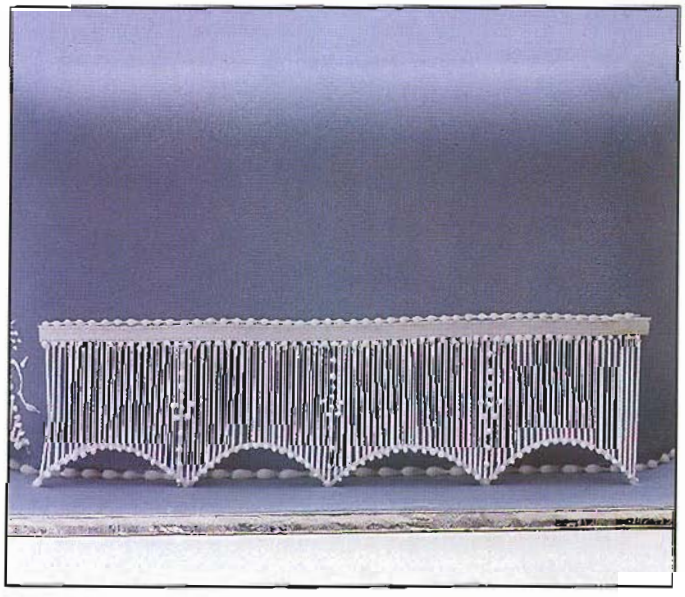
5 Tiered work: Mark a second row of scallops above the first, shaping the top to a point, or as required. Pipe lower row, then pipe a second layer of bridgework just above drop lines. Pipe upper row and finish with dots of icing and lacework.



6 Arched bridges: Inverted scallops are produced by turning the cake upside down to do the bridgework. Make a template to the shape required, then pipe the bridgework. When dry, turn the cake right-side up, pipe the lines, and decorate.



7 Wedding bells: Make bell templates and mark on cake. Use bevelled extension work to make curved bridgework, giving bells a three-dimensional look. Pipe large bulbs of icing at the base of each bell for the clappers; decorate as you wish.



8 Suspended points: In this design, both cake and board are turned upside down and a series of dropped loops is piped from the board. The cake is then turned right way up and fine threads are piped from the top line to the loops.

A perfect partnership

Flowers from the Orient provide some of the most unusual and eye-catching models for floral cake decoration. The tiger lily and oncidium orchid complement each other colour-wise, and balance each other in form.

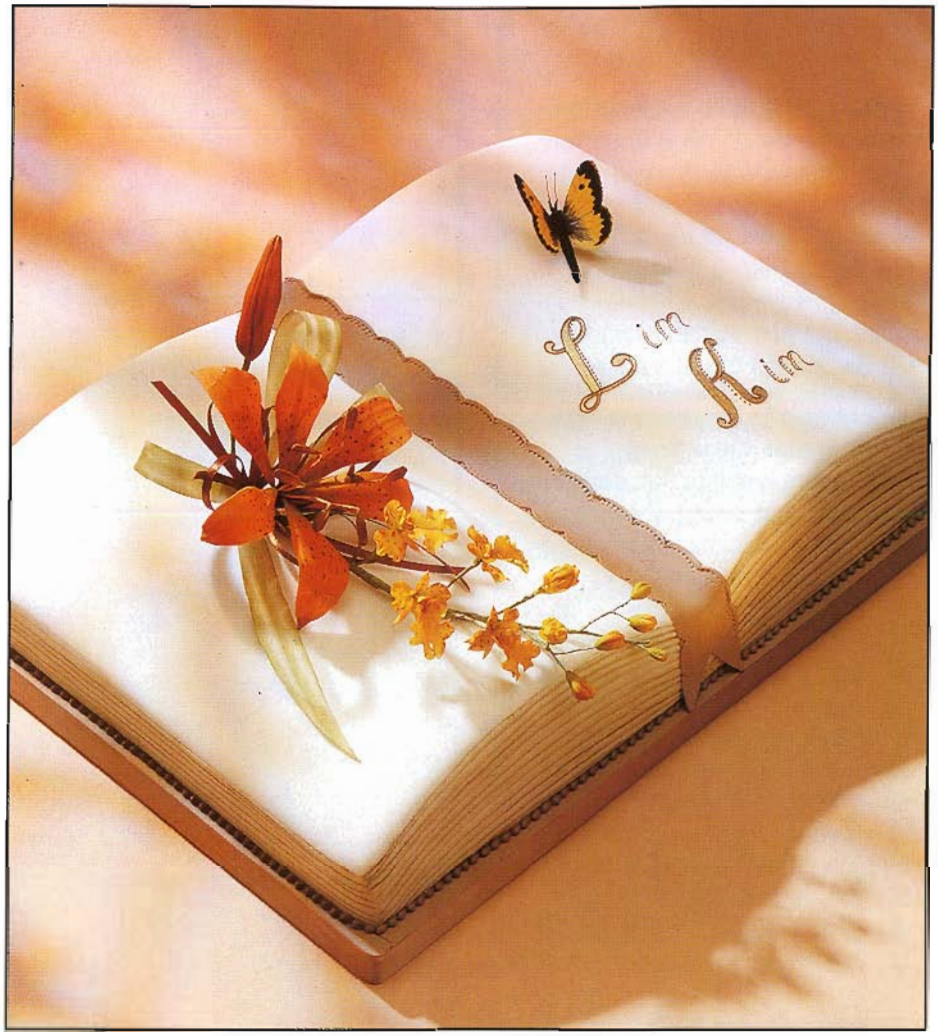
HAVE TO HAND

Ingredients: quantity of flower paste • orange, green and yellow paste colours • orange, brown, violet, plum and black petal dust.

Equipment: 6 lily stamens • fine-pointed tweezers • green-covered 26g and 28g wire • veining tool • paintbrushes • wooden dowel • floristry tape • orchid cutter.

Main skills: colouring flowering paste • moulding flowers.

DIFFICULTY	TIME	SUITABILITY
✓	⧗⧗	



The bold colour and appearance of the aptly-named tiger lily instantly set it apart from other, more feminine, pastel-coloured flowers. It therefore makes an ideal decoration for a non-traditional cake – perhaps for a man's birthday. Its colouring also makes it ideally suited to cakes with an autumnal theme.

Large, striking flowers such as the tiger lily can either stand alone as a cake decoration, or combine with a complementary flower, such as the dainty oncidium orchid. Tiger lilies are best used in sprays containing no more than three flowers.

BEAUTIFUL COLOURING

Flower paste must be used for the flowers to ensure that they set hard, and that they are strong enough for the petals and all the constituent parts to be wired securely together.

Part of the striking nature of these flowers is the delicate way in which they are coloured, so if you can't get hold of a fresh flower to use as a model, then study a coloured photograph or illustration carefully so that you can accurately represent the positioning of the markings on these brilliant, south-east-Asian flowers.

Once you have mastered the technique of moulding the tiger lily, you will be able to reproduce other members of the exquisite lily family, and when the cake is to be eaten, you can remove the spray of flowers and keep them as a beautiful memento of the occasion.

tip

FLOWER PASTE

Flower paste is edible, but dries to an extremely strong and hard finish. It is therefore not recommended to be eaten.

Making the tiger lily

PROFESSIONAL SECRETS

Properties of flower paste

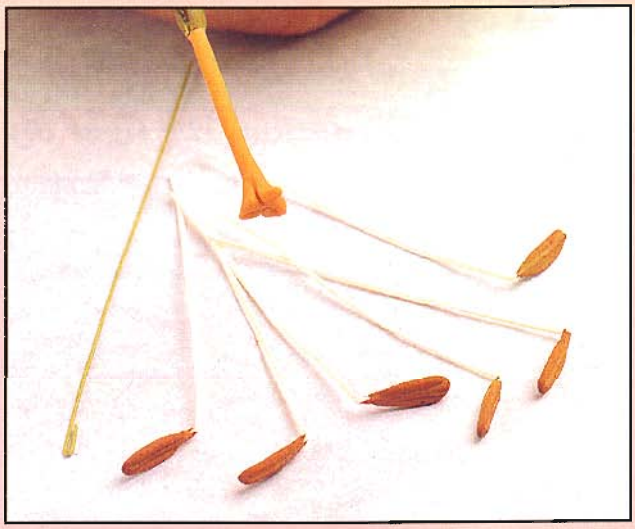
Flowers to be used in sprays on cake decorations have to be very hard, otherwise they shatter into tiny pieces while being wired together. Flower paste is therefore better than sugarpaste, although sugarpaste flowers can sometimes be suitable for individual use on the top of a cake.

- Flower paste can be rolled out so thinly that it is virtually transparent, yet it is still easy to work with and strong when dry. The finished results will resemble fine porcelain flowers.

- To store individual flower paste blossoms, wait until the paste is completely dry, and then store in a box between layers of tissue paper. If wired together in a spray, choose a box several centimetres wider than the spray all round. Place the spray on a bed of tissue and carefully pad with tissue around it. Place another tissue layer over the top.

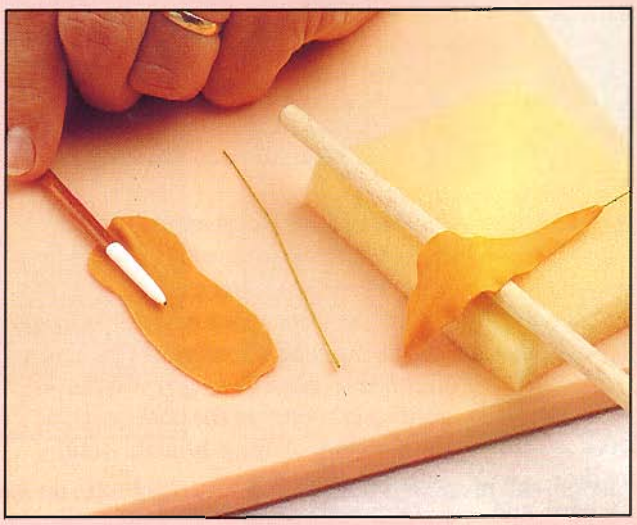
- If possible, use flower paste within a few days of making it. Anything left over can be sealed in a plastic bag, but it must be used within a month.

- As it is rolled so thinly, flower paste dries out quickly, so don't roll out more paste than you need. A walnut-sized piece goes a long way.

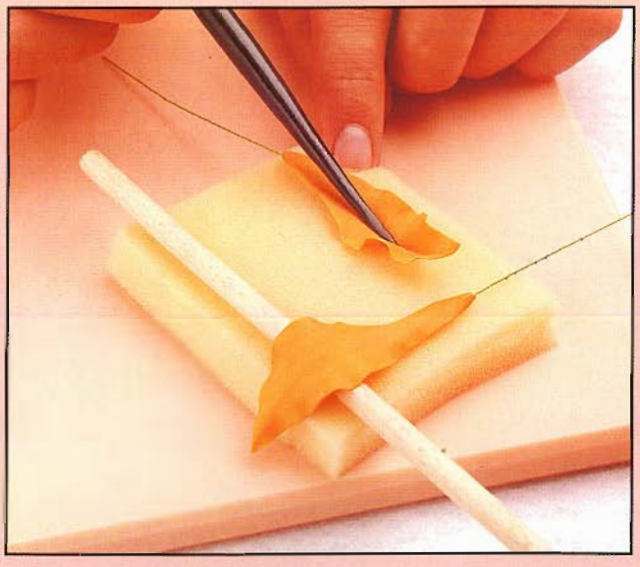


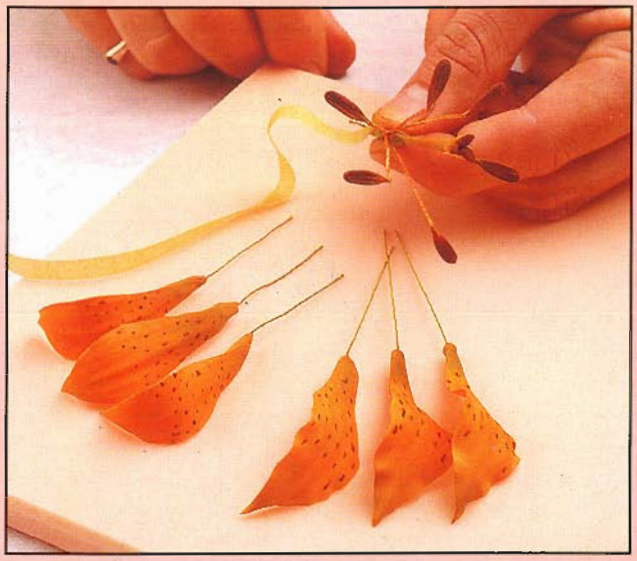
1 Pistils and stamens: Use pointed tweezers to bend the stamens, as shown. To make the pistil, roll a ball of orange flower paste into a tube shape. Hook the end of a piece of 26g wire, dip in egg white, and push down the tube until the pistil is same length as the stamens. Divide pistil into thirds at the top, pinching each section.

2 Using petal dust: To make the lobes, stick a tiny ball of green flower paste on the bottom of the pistil. Mould into an oval and make six ridges in it. Dust the stems of the stamens with orange petal dust and the tops with brown. Dust the end of the pistil brown, and the body orange.



3 Wiring the petals: Roll out some orange flower paste very thinly. Cut six petals freehand, making three of them slightly smaller. Leave a tubular shape at the base of each for the wire. Insert the piece of wire into the tube and mould the paste around it to secure.





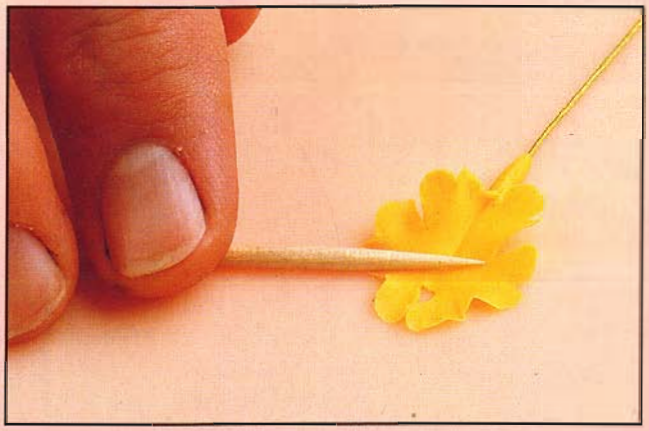
4 Shaping the petals: Mark a vein down the centre back of each petal with a veining tool. Slightly frill the edges of three of the petals with a cocktail stick. Lay the petals with the veined side down, over a piece of dowel so that they dry into a curved shape.

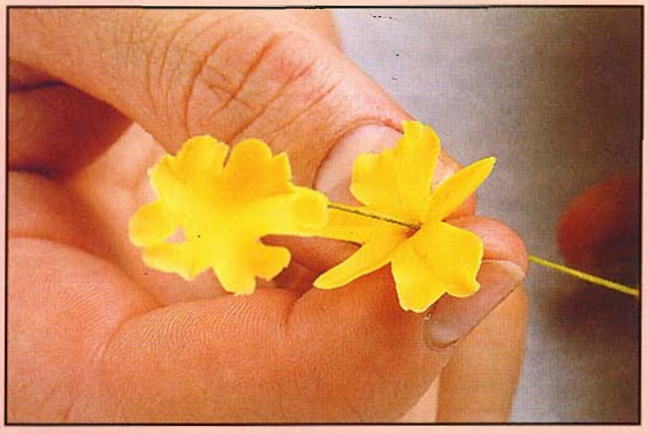
5 Assembling the stamens: Assemble the stamens so that they are facing out in a ring round the pistil and tape them together with floristry tape. Dust the petals with orange petal dust and the base with green. Paint the burgundy markings on the flower with a fine paintbrush.

6 Taping petals together: Bend the three smaller petals at an angle to the wire, to prevent snapping them with the pair of tweezers. Arrange these three petals in a triangle and tape them around the stamens and the pistil. Then, carefully tape the remaining larger petals securely in to the gaps between the smaller petals.

7 Calyx, bud and leaves: Thread a moulded green paste cone, base up, on to the wire stem and fit around petals to represent a calyx. For bud, tape three lengths of 26g wire, and dip hooked end into egg white. Mould a long cone of orange flower paste. Mark six veins. Make two flower paste leaves. Attach to 28g wire. Tape together leaves, bud and flowers.

Making the oncidium orchid





1 Forming the flower: Roll yellow flower paste, making it thicker at one end. Cut out the throat with orchid cutter. Put the part that makes the tube at the thick end. Dip hooked 26g wire into egg white and lay on throat. Wrap paste round hook. Roll with thumb and finger to form tube. Frill and mark veins.

2 Adding petals: Roll out more yellow flower paste. Cut lower part of orchid. Frill two wider petals, cup the sepals, and vein the centre of all sections. Thread on to the wire and stick to the back of the throat with egg white. Place a tiny ball of yellow paste at the base of the throat for stigma. Leave to dry.

3 Colouring the flower: Brush the petals with yellow dusting powder, adding green around the stigma and the base of the flower. Remember that using a flat paintbrush produces a more intense colour. Paint in the flower markings in a terracotta colour, as shown,with a fine paintbrush.

4 Adding buds: Using yellow flower paste, make the buds in various sizes. Cover some with frilled rose petals to give the effect of opening. Add the calyx. Dust the buds yellow and green. Wire the flowers and buds together to create a stem. Paint stem in mid-green.

helpline

COLOURING DETAILS

The beauty of these flowers lies largely in capturing their delicate markings, so you may have to mix certain petal dusts and paste colours before you arrive at the authentic shades.

The terracotta markings on the oncidium orchid are achieved by mixing red and yellow paste colour with clear spirit, and the burgundy markings of the tiger lily are created by mixing violet, plum and black dusting powder and clear spirit. When the flowers are finished, wire them into a spray and tape them together with florists wire.

Refer to the photographs for the positioning of the flowers and buds. The delicate oncidium orchid makes an ideal filler when used in a spray with the larger tiger lily. To paint the stem, mix green paste, white petal dust, and clear spirit to give a mid-green colour.

Cutting tools

Tools used for cutting and shaping in sugarcraft work range from ordinary kitchen knives to specialised items used only by cake decorators.

Many ordinary kitchen knives can be used in cake decorating work, but one or two more specialised cutting tools can also be a help when making cakes.

In an ideal world, cakes would turn out perfectly shaped every time, but for the occasions when they don't, and the top is not level enough for icing, a really long serrated knife is essential. Specially long knives can be obtained from catering suppliers, but a bread knife can be used equally well for all but the largest cakes. Hold the knife horizontally at the level required, and use a sawing action to remove the surplus cake.

Smaller, sharp-pointed knives are useful for trimming the surplus almond paste or icing away from the cake once it has been covered, as well as for cutting out component shapes for novelty cakes.

SCALPELS FOR FINE WORK

For very fine work, scalpels are essential. They are available from both sugarcraft and art supply shops, and consist of a very fine sharp-pointed blade set in a metal or plastic handle, ideal for cutting through sugarpaste cleanly and for making intricate shapes. The blades are replaceable, and should be changed frequently to obtain the best results. Scalpels should be stored carefully; they generally have a protective plastic sheath, which both makes them safe, and also guards the blade from damage. Some blades are not made of stainless steel, and to avoid corrosion, these must be absolutely dry before returning them to the sheath.

Palette knives, sometimes called spatulas, are another essential tool for the cake decorator. They are available in various sizes, up to about 35cm (14in) long. As well as the ordinary kitchen type with a straight handle, some have a cranked handle.

This is shaped to allow room for the fingers to grip the palette knife without getting in the way of work in progress and touching the surface of the cake. A palette knife blade does not have a cutting edge, but it is very flexible. Small ones are used for mixing royal icing, putting icing into an icing bag, and applying icing to the sides of a cake. Longer ones are used for spreading icing on to the cake top and for levelling its surface.

Palette knives come in a wide variety of sizes and styles.

SMALLER PALETTE KNIVES

For flower moulding and fine work, you will need a selection of very fine and flexible palette knives. These are basically artists' tools, available from art supply shops and also specialist cake-decorating suppliers. They may, instead of having a blade with parallel sides, have a tapered end. These are very useful for picking up flower paste petals or royal icing lace pieces, or for releasing runouts. The blades can vary from 2.5-10cm (1-4in) long. Some are made of carbon steel, which discolours if the knife is not completely dry when put away, or if it becomes damp during storage. However, any discolouration can easily be removed with a kitchen scourer.

A special knife has been developed for doing ribbon insertion work. When cutting the slits into the sugarpaste, it is essential that they do not penetrate through the sugarpaste into the marzipan coating, as this allows air to get in and makes the cake dry and unpalatable.

The special knives known as ribbon insertion tools are designed with a flat blade and a cutting edge at the end (similar to a chisel). This enables cuts to be made to the same width as the ribbon, penetrating the cake by only about 3mm (1/8in). The cuts are made in pairs and the ribbon pieces are cut so that there is enough to cover the space between them and tuck into the slits.

Scalpels and pointed kitchen knives are used for fine cutting work.

BRIDE KNIFE

Finally, if you make wedding cakes on a regular basis, you may wish to invest in a large cake knife or bride knife. This is a large strong knife with an ornate handle, designed to make light work of cutting a rich fruit cake and to look good in the photographs.

ALL THE TERMS AND TECHNIQUES OF CAKE DECORATING

LEMON JUICE

Used to flavour sponges, fillings, or icings, lemon juice also gives greater flexibility to quick-setting icing and allows greater working time.

LETTERING

Methods of applying initials, names or inscriptions on to cake design. They can be formed by piping with royal icing, appliqué, or using runouts. These methods can incorporate additional designs, such as figures. Trace the lettering on to greaseproof paper, then place over rolled-out modelling paste for appliqué, or pipe round the edge and flood for runout. Attach appliqué letters to the cake with water or egg white, and runout with dabs of icing.

LILIES

These early summer flowers have several heads per stem and highly coloured petals – usually bright yellow, red or orange, but also white – surrounding long, slender stamens. The flower heads can be copied in modelling paste to adorn a cake with a strong colour design.

LIME FLAVOURING

A sharp-tasting essence used to flavour a cake, filling, or icing decoration. It can be bought in concentrated form or made up from cream with freshly squeezed lime juice added.

LINEWORK

This piping technique is based on using straight or curved lines. to form a design. Graduated line piping is often used around the base of a cake or to disguise the join between a collar and cake top.

LINING CAKE TINS

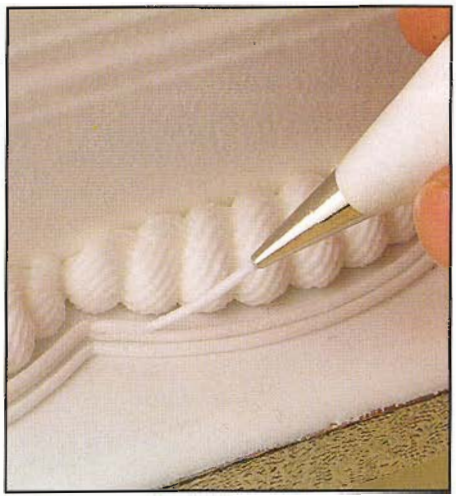
Linings prevent cake mixtures from sticking to tins during cooking, and from damage when the cake is turned out. Lining is used for most sponge and fruit cakes linings, except a Victoria-type sponge, which detaches itself from the cake tin's sides when cooked. First grease the tin with vegetable fat, then line with greaseproof paper. Cut it to size so it lies flat on the bottom and against the sides of the tin. Often, the lining will come away from the tin with the cake. This can be peeled off when the cake has cooled.

LIQUID COLOUR

Edible food colouring, obtainable from specialist shops and some supermarket chains, which is used to colour icing, marzipan, or paste prior to piping and modelling. It can also be applied neat with a fine brush to paint in parts of a design – for example, facial features, or background foliage.

LIQUID GLUCOSE

Liquid glucose has a thick, syrupy texture which becomes runny when warmed. It is used in cake decorating to add to pastes to keep them pliable, or to sugar syrup to prevent crystallisation. It is



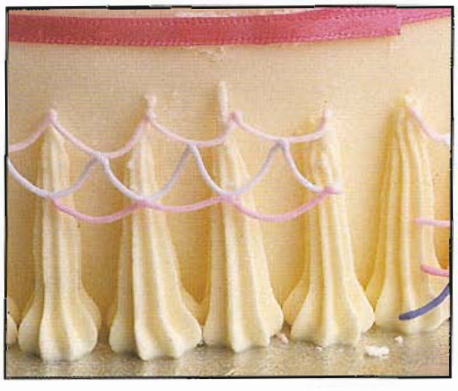
available at cake-decorating shops and chemists' shops.

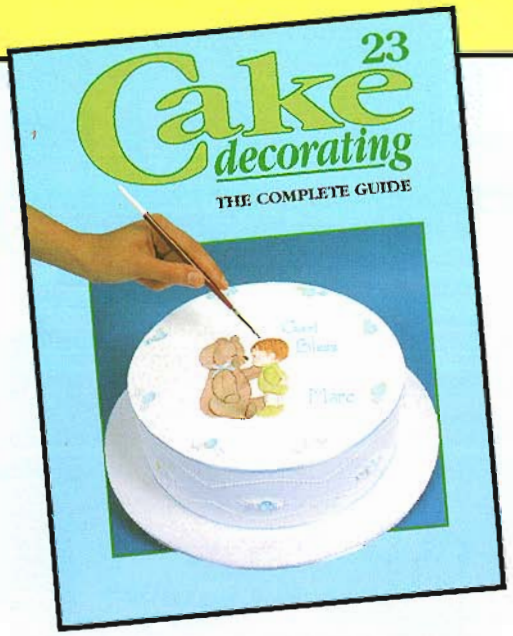
LOGS

Small lengths of cut tree trunks or branches. These are a popular motif for Christmas cakes and can be formed using brown royal icing piped from a wide-aperture, star-shaped tube; modelling paste moulded and veined; or chocolate flake pieces. Christmas cakes in the shape of logs are also popular.

LOOPS

Loose semi-circles joined together to form a continuous pattern. Can be piped using a fine-pointed tube by pulling the icing away from the cake surface at intervals. Can also be used as a substitute for lacework shapes.





COMING IN ISSUE 23

Cake decorating

- Ideas
- Techniques
- Tips
- Skills

CLASSIC *cakes*
A boy and his bear

BRIGHT *ideas*
Chocolate box cake

CAKE *craft*
Classic stencils

DECORATING *know-how*
Simple lettering techniques

SECRETS *of success*
Icing shaped cakes

FINISHING *touch*
The pretty poinsettia

A-Z *of cake decorating*

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